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Mining to Continue, Rebel Chief Says

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MANAGUA, Nicaragua, April 11 — The largest anti-Sandinista insurgent group met in Honduras on Tuesday and decided to continue mining Nicaraguan ports, according to one of the group's top officials. He denied that Americans were involved in the mining.

The official, Adolfo Calero Portocarrero, who heads the Nicaraguan Democratic Force, said in a telephone interview from Honduras that leaders of the group made the decision at a meeting in Tegucigalpa, the Honduran capital.

He said critics of the mining failed to recognize the importance of disrupting navigation around Nicaraguan ports.

"These people do not realize we are at war," he said. "We consider Nicaraguan harbors to be war zones."

"We assert our right to continue mining Nicaraguan harbors in order to stop the massive flow of Soviet arms which are intended for use in a genocidal campaign against Miskito Indians and Nicaraguan peasants."

Senate Opposes Mining

On Tuesday, the United States Senate approved a nonbinding resolution that opposed the use of Federal funds to mine Nicaraguan waters. The action came after reports from Administration officials and members of Congress that Americans working for the Central Intelligence Agency aboard a ship off Nicaragua's Pacific coast had been supervising such mining.

The coordinator of the Sandinista junta, Daniel Ortega Saavedra, said Tuesday that "although we appreciate the efforts the United States Congress has made against the undeclared war the United States is waging against Nicaragua, the chapter of the mining of the ports has not ended."

Mr. Calero denied reports that American intelligence agents were involved in the mining. According to the reports, the mines have been planted by an elite group of Latin American commandos who use small, high-speed boats to penetrate shipping lanes close to the Nicaraguan coast.

"We claim that there are no Americans involved," Mr. Calero said. "Not one United States citizen is involved in the mining."

He did not say whether the mining

would continue if Congress refuses to approve further aid for the insurgents. He and other insurgent leaders have not conceded publicly that they receive covert funds from the United States, but Congress has appropriated millions of dollars for such aid and diplomats in Central America believe the bulk of it is being sent to the Democratic Force.

Mines 'Serving a Purpose'

Mr. Calero declined to say how the mines were being placed, but he said they "are serving a purpose."

"A ship loaded with explosives will think twice about entering Nicaraguan waters," he declared.

Mr. Calero said deliveries of Soviet bloc arms to Nicaragua allowed the Sandinista Government to continue sending weapons to revolutionaries in El Salvador.

"Our actions are trying to stop the drive of the guerrillas to overthrow the recently elected Government of El Salvador," he said. A rebel victory in El Salvador, he said, "would be fatal to our cause."

An Offer by Insurgents

Another anti-Sandinista insurgent group, the Costa Rica-based Revolutionary Democratic Alliance, offered Tuesday to end its participation in the mining of Nicaraguan harbors if its leaders were allowed to return to Nicaragua and take part freely in national elections. The offer was made by the political leader of the group, Alfonso Robelo Callejas, a former member of the Sandinista junta, during a visit to Rome. The Democratic Force has also offered to lay down its arms if the Sandinistas make political concessions, including cutting military ties to the Soviet Union and Cuba.

Sandinista leaders have repeatedly vowed never to negotiate with insurgent leaders. The pro-Government press in Managua has recently been publishing articles in which leaders of Sandinista "mass organizations" are quoted as demanding that insurgent leaders, including Mr. Calero and Mr. Robelo, be placed on trial in absentia.

News dispatches from London, one of which was published here Tuesday in the opposition newspaper La Prensa, have reported that Lloyd's, the company that insures much of the world's shipping, is considering increasing its rates for vessels planning to enter

Nicaraguan waters. The reports said Lloyd's would take the step if there was another mine explosion soon. Seven ships have been damaged by mines near Nicaraguan ports in the past month, according to the Nicaraguan Government.

A Threat to Civilians

In interviews, European and Latin American diplomats said the mining of Nicaraguan ports had provoked an international reaction against the insurgents and their American backers.

"As long as the war consisted of Nicaraguans fighting Nicaraguans inside Nicaragua, a lot of us were willing to turn a blind eye to the American role," a European ambassador said. "But mining ports puts the thing on an entirely different level. It is a threat to civilian navigation and to the lives of sailors from any nation that trades with Nicaragua."

Mr. Calero, formerly manager of the Coca-Cola franchise in Nicaragua, said that condemnation of the mining was unfair because it overlooked what he described as "terrorist acts by the Sandinistas."

"Not one person has been killed by our mines," he said, "but the Sandinistas have planted land mines inside Honduras that have killed American journalists."

He said this was a reference to the deaths last year of Dial Torgerson, a reporter, and Richard Cross, a photographer, who were killed after their car apparently drove over a mine planted on a dirt road a few yards from Nicaraguan territory. The Sandinistas blamed Honduras for their deaths.

Need for Planes Noted

Mr. Calero and other leaders of the Democratic Force said their guerrillas are now engaged in their largest offensive to date. But one of the leaders, Edgar Chamorro Coronel, complained that transport planes needed to supply troops had not been delivered as promised.

Mr. Chamorro would not say who had made the promise. The United States is the main supplier of the insurgents.

"They have lied to us," Mr. Chamorro said. "We were told we could get the planes, but all we have is promises."

Mr. Ortega, coordinator of the Sandinista junta, said recently that 8,000

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